

THE WAY OF WISDOM NO. 2862

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*"There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen:
the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it."*

Job 28:7-8

IN this chapter Job is speaking of the hidden treasures that are to be found deep down in the bowels of the earth. The keen eyes of the vultures, though they see their prey afar off, have never seen the gold, and silver, and other precious metals which lie in the dark places of the earth, and the lions, especially the young lions hungering for their prey, though they will lie in wait in their lairs in the dens and caves of the earth, have never been able to descend into places so deep as those that are opened up by men who seek after gold and silver.

Yet further on in the chapter, we notice that Job refers to the search after wisdom, and that he seems to say that though men should explore the deep places of the earth with all the diligence of miners seeking gold and silver—though they should exert all their mental force as miners use all their muscular vigor—and though they should employ all the machinery within their reach, as men do who pierce through the rocks in search of precious treasure—yet it is not within the range of human labor and skill to attain unto wisdom. That can only be found by another and a higher method, it must come to us by revelation from God, for we cannot find it by our own efforts.

I believe, therefore, that I am justified in using the expressions which are found in my text, in a spiritual sense, for I think that Job meant to teach us not only what is true of the treasures hidden in the earth, but also something concerning the path of wisdom, which is altogether beyond the ken of the most piercing eye of reason or imagination.

I shall use the language of our text, first, *in reference to the way of God*, which is in the highest sense, *the way of wisdom*, and then secondly, *in reference to the path of the truly wise*, which is also, secondarily, the path of wisdom as far as mortal man can be wise, so far as he who is born of a woman, can walk in the way of wisdom.

I. First then, IN REFERENCE TO THE WAY OF GOD. His way, in dealing with men, is past our power to find out.

Think, first of all, of the way of God *in relation to predestination and free agency*. Many have failed to understand how everything, from the smallest event to the greatest, can be ordained and fixed, and yet how it can be equally true that man is a responsible being, and that he acts freely, choosing the evil and rejecting the good. Many have tried to reconcile these two things, and various schemes of theology have been formulated with the objective of bringing them into harmony. I do not believe that they are two parallel lines, which can never meet, but I do believe that for all practical purposes, they are so nearly parallel that we might regard them as being so. They *do* meet, but only in the infinite mind of God is there a converging point where they melt into one.

As a matter of practical, everyday experience with each one of us, they continually melt into one, but as far as all finite understanding goes, I do not believe that any created intellect can find the meeting place. Only the Uncreated as yet knows this. It would be a very simple thing to understand the predestination of God if men were clay in the hands of the potter and nothing more. That figure is rightly

used in the Scriptures because it reveals one side of truth, if it contained the whole truth, the difficulty that puzzles so many would entirely cease.

But man is not only clay, he is a great deal more than that, for God has made him an intelligent being and given him understanding and judgment, and above all, will. Fallen and depraved, but still not destroyed, are our judgment, our understanding, and our power to will, they are all under bondage, but they are still within us.

If we were simply blocks of wood, like the beams and timbers in this building, it would be easy to understand how God could prearrange where we should be put, and what purpose we should serve, but it is not easy—nay, it is difficult—I venture to say that it is impossible for us to understand how predestination should come true, in every jot and tittle, fix everything, and yet that there should never be in the whole history of mankind, a single violation of the will or a single use of constraint, other than fit and proper constraint, upon man so that he acts according to his own will, just as if there were no predestination whatever, and yet at the same time, the will of God is, in all respects, being carried out.

In order to get rid of this difficulty, there are some who deny either the one truth or the other. Some seem to believe in a kind of free agency which virtually dethrones God, while others run to the opposite extreme by believing in a sort of fatalism which practically exonerates man from all blame. Both of these views are utterly false, and I scarcely know which of the two is the more to be deprecated.

We are bound to believe both sides of the truth revealed in the Scriptures, so I admit that when a Calvinist says that all things happen according to the predestination of God, he speaks the truth, and I am willing to be called a Calvinist, but when an Arminian says that, when a man sins, the sin is his own, and that if he continues in sin and perishes, his eternal damnation will lie entirely at his own door, I believe that he also speaks the truth, though I am not willing to be called an Arminian.

The fact is, there is some truth in both these systems of theology, the mischief is that, in order to make a human system appear to be complete, men ignore a certain truth, which they do not know how to put into the scheme which they have formed, and very often, that very truth, which they ignore, proves to be like the stone which the builders rejected, one of the headstones of the corner, and their building suffers serious damage through its omission.

Now, brethren, if I could fully understand these two truths, and could clearly expound them to you—if I could prove to you that they are perfectly consistent with one another, I should be glad to do so, and to escape the censures which some people constantly pour upon those who are trying to preach the whole of revealed truth, but it is more than my soul is worth for me to attempt to alter and trim God's truth so as to make it pleasing to men. I preach it as I find it in God's Word. I am not responsible for what is in the Book, I am only responsible for telling out what I find there, as it is taught to me by the Holy Spirit.

But mark this, to the mind of God there is no difficulty concerning these two truths, though there is, to us, so much mystery and perplexity. It is all simple enough to Him, He is omnipotent in the world of mind as well as in the world of matter, and He is omniscient, He knows everything, He foresees everything, so that there are no difficulties to Him.

I suppose that if it will add to our happiness in heaven for us to understand this way of God, which as yet the vulture's eye hath never seen, He will reveal it to us, yet it may be that even there, it will be of no practical use for us to understand it, but it will be better for us, even throughout eternity, still to continue as little children at our Heavenly Father's feet, believing a great deal which, even there, we cannot comprehend.

Even in this life I am as pleased not to know what God does not tell me as I am to know what He reveals to me—at least, if I am not, I ought to be, for that is the condition of a true disciple of Christ, to be inquisitive up to the point in which His Lord is communicative, but to stay just there and say, "If, my Master, You have anything to say to me, yet, in Your wisdom, You know that I cannot bear it now, my ear is closed while Your tongue is still, and my heart asks for no more when You tell me that You have revealed enough." Believe me, brethren, there is a path which God takes, which you cannot understand

yet. You may look, and look, and look, as with an eagle's eye, but you may blind that eye by glaring at the sun, you may force your way, as with a lion's heart, into the deep mysteries of God, but you must beware lest you perish in the pit of controversy, or be taken, as in a net, in difficulties which you cannot break through. Doubting and inquiring man, be you satisfied that God is infinitely above you, and that you can no more comprehend Him than your hand can hold the ocean, or your fingers grip the sun.

If there were no mysteries in our holy faith, we might well believe that it was devised by men like ourselves, for if men could fully understand it, men might have invented it, but as it is far beyond the comprehension of the mightiest human intellect, we recognize that it is the work of the infinite God. Infinite must His Gospel and His truth be because He is Himself infinite, and dark and mysterious must His pathway sometimes be, though He Himself dwells in light that is insufferable to mortal eyes. Finely does John Milton put this thought in his apostrophe to God—

"Dark with excessive bright Thy skirts appear."

Passing on to another illustration of the same great truth, I remind you that God is equally beyond our ken *in the accomplishment of the designs of His providence*. There are ways of God, in dealing with the human race, which are very perplexing to the judgment of such poor mortals as we are. We try to study a piece of history, and—especially if it is a short piece of history—it appears to us all tangled and confused.

A further research, over a longer period, will often explain what could not be understood in the shorter range of vision, but even history as a whole, from the creation and the fall until now, contains many strange puzzles to a man who believes that God is, through it all, working out His own glory, and that a part of His glory will consist in producing the highest amount of good to the greatest number of His creatures.

What a mass of mysteries meets us on the very threshold of human history. The serpent in the garden—how and why came it to be there? And the devil in the serpent—why was there a devil at all? And the evil that made the angel into a devil—why was that permitted? And all the evil that has been since then—why has it not been destroyed? We cannot answer any of these queries. The Negro's question to the missionary, "If God is stronger than Satan, why does not He kill him," is another inquiry which we cannot answer.

Depend upon it, if it were, on the whole, best that the devil should be killed, he would be killed, and if it had been, after all, most for God's glory that there should be no evil, there would have been none. We do not know how and why certain things have happened, and we must be content not to know unless God reveals it to us.

All through history God seems to be aiming at a certain mark, yet His arrow does not hit the target as far as you and I can judge. Often He appears to do as the rifleman does, who knows that if he sent the ball in a direct line to the target, he would miss it, so he makes allowance for certain deflections which will be caused by the force of attraction, by the wind, and various other opposing influences, and aims accordingly.

God often proves that the nearest way to attain His end is to go round about, so, when He means to cleanse a man, He sometimes allows Him to first get more foul, when He intends to clothe him, He first strips him naked, when He resolves to enrich him, He first makes him as poor as Lazarus at the rich man's gate, and strange to say, when He means to make him alive, He kills him. God's modes of procedure then, allow for deflection, and every other kind of influence, and are not to be understood by us.

If you take the whole range of history, and look at it carefully, you will be obliged to feel that if God has been working there, as we are quite sure He has, ordering all things with consummate wisdom, then His pathway through the world is one which no vulture's eye have ever seen, and which no lion or lion's whelp has ever traveled.

It may be that some of you are, at the present moment, complaining of a certain providential dealing of God with regard to you, and that you are thinking and saying that it must be an evil providence. Yet it is, all the while, one of the best things that has ever happened to you. That over which you are now mourning will give you good cause for singing in a little while. Probably that tribulation, which fetches most tears from our eyes here, will be among the subjects of our choicest song in the eternal realms of joy. We need not know, and we cannot know, what God is doing, but we may be quite sure that He does all things well.

Very much is this also the truth in another respect, namely, *in the methods of His grace*. God will certainly save His chosen people, He will bring home all His lost children, but how strangely does He deal with some of them! His pathway in grace no vulture's eye hath ever seen, and no lion or lion's whelp has ever trodden. I have known Him allow a child of His to go into sin after sin before He has saved him.

A godly mother has anxiously prayed that her boy might be converted, but he has not been. He has grown up to manhood, and there has been much tender solicitude for him, and many prayers on his behalf, yet he has passed twenty, thirty, or forty years in sin, and has grown worse and worse. It did not seem as if all this could be according to God's grace, yet it was, for in the mysterious providence of God, this man was brought low by sin, humbled by the iniquity which carried him into the far country, and led him to waste his substance in riotous living, and then, and not till then, did he come to God.

His mother had gone to heaven, doubting whether her prayers for him would ever be heard, others who were anxious about him slept amidst the clods of the valley, not knowing, except by faith, that their supplications for him would be heard, and that man, because he had gone so far in sin, became the greater monument of the power of sovereign grace, was the better able to tell others what God had done, was the more firmly bound to Christ, was the more ardent in Christ's service through the gratitude he felt, and became for God's purposes, a better instrument than he would have been if he had been brought in before.

John Bunyan, if he had not been among the chief of sinners, might never have been among the chief of saints. Had he never been what he was—one of the worst men in the village—he might never have preached as he did about "Jerusalem Sinners Saved," and might never have so boldly declared that the biggest sinners should receive the greatest mercy, and that God should be most glorified in their salvation.

I know that some people have turned this great truth to an evil purpose, for he who looks at God's way, and sees the greatness of His grace, may, if he is wicked enough, draw the inference that he may continue in sin that grace may abound. Paul tells us plainly what the doom of such men will be, "whose damnation is just."

A child of God draws no such evil inference as that from God's mercy, but he says, "After such love as that, how can I sin against the Lord?" So, in saving men, God traverses a path which no fowl knows, which the vulture's eye hath not seen, and the lion or the lion's whelp hath not trodden. God knows best how to time His gift of grace or His postponement of grace, He knows why He chooses this man at this time, and that man at that time, so let Him do as seemeth good in His sight, for He always doeth right, and unto His name be praise forever and ever.

Now, beloved, I am persuaded that this truth may also be applied *to the great things of God which are yet to come, in the latter days, and in the eternity of glory*. I do not often preach upon the book of Revelation, nor upon the marvels that are to occur during the millennial period, or at the time of the ingathering of the Jews, and so on. I will tell you the reason why I do not, and I think it is a sufficient one, namely, that I do not understand these things.

If I do not have clear views about these things, I will leave them alone until I have. I have often studied them, and I have never found anything as easy as the refuting of every view I have heard or read about the future, nor anything so difficult as to invent a view which somebody else could not refute. There are some great truths about the future, that are clearly revealed—such as the second coming of

Christ, the flooding of the world with the Gospel so that all flesh shall see the salvation of God, the ingathering of the Jews to Christ, if not to their own land, and so on, but as to the order of the various events and the putting together of the various pieces of the puzzle, I believe that my text is true that “there is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen; the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.”

It is not easy to tell what Paul means in that wonderful passage, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father....that God may be all in all.” What new worlds may yet be created, what revolts there may be among fresh orders of creatures, how many orders of creatures there may yet be in the universe, and how great and comprehensive the vast dominions of JEHOVAH may be, we do not at present, know, but we shall know all that we need to know in due time. It is enough for us now to know that our Bible is true, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and that we shall be with Him where He is, and behold His glory forever and ever.

Why is there all this mystery? Is it not because God is so great? We can never gauge His greatness by our measuring line or plummet. We get utterly lost whenever we begin to estimate God’s unsearchable greatness. Some of you have, perhaps, studied a little astronomy. You have begun to hear or read about the millions and millions of miles which some of the fixed stars are away from us, and yet, far beyond those, there may be others from which we are so distant that we are, comparatively speaking, quite near to those that now seem so far away.

In trying to realize these wonders in the heavens, one feels as though the brain needed fresh faculties to enable it to grasp even that which the telescope reveals, yet all the starry worlds, which human eyes have gazed upon through the most powerful glass yet made, may only be like some tiny cove or bay upon the seashore of a universe which to us must be utterly boundless. Yet that universe, which we conceive to be boundless, is all known to the God who created and sustains it. We are utterly lost in the contemplation of the greatness of God’s works, then how can we imagine that we can ever understand God who is infinitely greater than the greatest of the works of His hands?

Then, next, are not all these things mysteries to us because we are so little? I do not merely mean those of us who are feeble, and poor, and ignorant, but I mean the great divines, the doctors of the Sorbonne, the members of our Royal Societies, our D.D.’s, LL.D.’s, and all our most learned men—all are fools compared with the wisdom of the Omniscient, all are feeble compared with the Almighty.

I do not know how much a gnat understands, but I feel sure that a gnat understands a far larger proportion of what I know, than I can comprehend of what God knows. A fly on the dome of St. Paul’s has a very imperfect idea of the greatness and glories of the cathedral, a still more incomplete idea of London, and a far more inadequate idea of England. Even if the fly knew England thoroughly, he would need to learn much more to enable him to understand the world—and then there would be the sun—and the sun itself is only like a tiny point of light compared with the greater worlds in God’s universe. If the fly could comprehend all those worlds, he would still be no appreciable way towards understanding God.

If you knew all that was to be known about a number of marbles that I had given to my sons to play with, that would not prove that you knew all about me, so, if we could understand everything about all the worlds that God has made, it would not prove that we could understand God Himself. He is infinitely above our loftiest conception, and we are just nothing at all in comparison with Him. You talk very loudly about your opinion, and your thoughts, and your conclusions—ah! poor souls, the chattering of sparrows in the street is as much worthy to be called wisdom as the predilections of the most learned men among you apart from anything that they have been taught by God the Holy Spirit. All the wisdom that they have, which they have learned by themselves, is but varnished folly and nothing more.

Moreover, dear friends, the powers we possess are absolutely insignificant compared with God’s. In trying to comprehend the Almighty, we are like a child with a thimble, seeking to tell the size of the sea. We cannot, at our utmost, hold more than a thimbleful, and besides that, our thimble leaks.

The powers that we have are warped and spoiled by sin and sinful influence. When we come into this world, our powers are very far from being fully developed, and as they are being developed, somebody or other comes along and warps us with prejudice in our early youth, and as we grow older, we make other prejudices of our own, so that what we might know we sometimes do not care to know.

Our scales also, in which we try to weigh God, are not accurate. Instead of being true, they are all out of gear, and utterly unreliable as well as inadequate to such a task. Our faculties are so disordered and disarranged by all manner of surrounding circumstances that we cannot comprehend much about Him who is incomprehensible even to the loftiest created intelligence. And besides this, we have such a little time in which to learn about God. A child, going to school for five minutes, knows as much about Greek as we do about God in seventy years, apart from what He pleases to teach us by His Spirit.

Even with regard to God's dealings with His people, what mistakes they make in their judgments! No doubt, Protestantism in England was, upon the whole, greatly strengthened and more deeply rooted by the persecutions under cruel Queen Mary. Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" (which could not have been written had not the martyrs suffered and died), is still, next to the Bible, the great master-gun of Protestantism.

Yet many of the Protestants who lived in Mary's day, must have felt that God had made an awful mistake in allowing that woman to sit upon the throne, and to do so much towards putting down the Gospel of Christ by fire, and sword, and imprisonment. Yet they made a great mistake in judging by the few years of Mary's reign. God was judging more justly by the whole history of the land for hundreds of years to come.

There is not much more wisdom in man's judgment of God than in the flies' fabled judgment of an elephant. It is said that a senate of flies once determined to form a judgment concerning an elephant, so one of them settled on the great creature's ear, and walked all round it, and then said that an elephant was a long flabby mass of flesh of a certain shape.

Another fly had settled on one of the huge legs of the animal, and he said that an elephant was a tall column, something like the trunk of a cedar. One lit somewhere on the back, and he said that an elephant was a great moving plain, a sort of animal table-land. The flies could not agree upon any theory of what the creature was like, the fact was that none of them had any clear idea of the whole elephant, but only a partial notion concerning the portion that they could manage to see.

So, all that we can do, if we have fifty years in which to study the Scriptures, is to get some imperfect idea of a part of the great truth of God. Yet some talk as if they knew all about it, like a man who says that he knows all about the Continent because he once landed at Boulogne for a few minutes, and then crossed the Channel again. Suppose that we have landed on the shores of knowledge, and that we have been there for fifty years, what is that compared with eternity?

What shall I further say before I leave this point? First, let none of us despond because we do not know everything. Let no one say, "I am not God's child because my knowledge is so limited." A grain of grace is worth more than a ton of knowledge. If you have but a spark of true faith in Jesus Christ, it is better than a whole volcano full of worldly wisdom.

Do not say, "I cannot be saved because I cannot understand all mysteries." Who but God can understand them? Be thankful that the way of salvation is not a mystery, it is this, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Are you puzzled about the doctrine of election? Do not ever fall into the mistake of imagining that nobody goes to heaven but those who understand that great truth. There are many there who disbelieved it while they were here below, though I think they rejoice in it now. It is not essential to salvation that you should understand that or any other difficult doctrine of the Scriptures. Do you believe in Jesus as your Savior? Then go your way, and rest assured that you will in due time find yourself in heaven.

Again, let us never arraign God before our bar. It is a horrible thing for any man ever to say, "Well, if God acts like that, I do not see the justice of it." How dare you even hint that the Judge of all the earth

is not just? He has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," so do not you say, "It cannot be so." Is it so written in God's Word? Then it is so just because it is there. If God has said anything, it is not right for you to ask for an explanation of His reason for saying it, or to summon Him to your judgment seat. What impertinence this is! He must always do right, He cannot do wrong.

Some have staggered over the doctrine of eternal punishment because they could not see how that could be consistent with God's goodness. I have only one question to ask concerning that or any other doctrine—Does God reveal it in the Scriptures? Then I believe it, and leave to Him the vindication of His own consistency. I am sure that He will not inflict a pain upon any creature which that creature does not deserve, that He will never cause any sorrow or misery which is not absolutely necessary, and that He will glorify Himself by doing the right, the loving, the kind thing, in the end. If we do not see it to be so, it will be none the less so because we are blind.

The finger on the lip is the right attitude for us in the presence of things revealed by God, or wrought by God, as David said, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didst it." If You did it, O Lord, there is no question about the rightness of it, for You are supreme, and You ought to be supreme! There is none like You for goodness, for love, for wisdom. Your will ought to be—so let it be—done on earth, as it is heaven, let it be done everywhere, for what You do is ever best.

II. I have not much time left for the second part of my discourse which is IN REFERENCE TO THE TRULY WISE, that is, to those who are wise according to Job's declaration in the twenty-eighth verse of this chapter, "Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Concerning their path, we may truly say, that no fowl knoweth it, no vulture's eye hath seen it, no lion or lion's whelp has trodden it.

First, *the entrance of the Christian into that path is beyond human knowledge*. Who can explain what it is to be born again? The very figure used by our Savior implies a mystery. Our introduction into this world is shrouded in mystery, so is our introduction into the spiritual world—the world of grace. You will never be able to explain, even though you have experienced it, how the Spirit of God creates a living soul, as it were, within the ribs of death, how He breathes into our soul the breath of spiritual life so that we, who were enemies to God, become the newborn children in His family. This secret cannot be told by mortal man, for he does not know it, it is known to God alone.

And next, *the walk of the Christian along that path as equally beyond human understanding*. How shall I tell you what it is to walk by faith? I have sometimes had, before my mind's eye, as it were, a vision. I thought I saw a great staircase, made of light. There appeared to be nothing solid or earthly about it. I was called to ascend this staircase. Beneath my feet there seemed to be nothing. Each step I stood upon appeared to be the last, yet I went on, on, on, up, up, up, till I was at a dizzy height, and I thought that a voice said to me, "Look up." I could see no other step, but as fast as I ascended one tier, I was told still to go on, and fresh steps of light revealed themselves beneath my ascending feet. I trod upon the clouds and found them to be granite.

It seemed to be thin air and mist, to mortal men, it was nothing. They laughed at me for trusting to it, but each time my foot went down upon the stair, I found it to be like the eternal hills that are never to be moved. When, in my vision, I had climbed, and climbed, and climbed, till I seemed to look down upon the stars, I still climbed on, and I understood that this is walking by faith—going ever upward, seeing Him who is invisible, depending upon Him whom no mortal eye can see, but who is clearly recognized by our spiritual senses—grasped by the hand of faith, seen by the eye of faith, heard by the ear of faith—walking through a desert where there is no corn growing, yet daily gathering full supplies of heavenly manna—standing by a rock in which there is no water, yet seeing the living floods leap forth to refresh the weary soul. This is walking by faith, and it is a great mystery.

I have known some, with eyes like a vulture's, who have said that they could live by reason. They always did that which they perceived to be best. They would never venture a step beyond where logic would lead them. Ah, sirs, your bleared eyes, which you think to be so keen, can never see the path of

the Christian! Others have fancied that to work themselves up into a high state of excitement and enthusiasm, is to lead a Christian life. Believe me, sirs, your vulture eye hath not seen this God made path. Faith is reasonable, in the highest sense, for it reasons upon the real truth, whereas mere human reason only reasons upon the semblance of truth.

Some, who have no more spiritual knowledge than a lion's whelps, have said, "All you have to do is to persuade yourself that you are one of God's elect and it is so." Ah, they know not the path of faith, and they who follow their lead will go down to destruction.

Another says, "I feel much that is good within myself, and I believe that I have strength enough, and wisdom enough, to find my way to heaven." Ah, you may be strong as a fierce lion, but you know not the way of wisdom. That is the very opposite way to yours.

We who walk by faith, have nothing in ourselves to lean upon. Our very weakness is our strength because it drives us to the Almighty. We have nothing to rely upon except this—that it is written that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and we depend on Him, and upon the oath and covenant of God, the covenant that has been sealed with the precious blood of Jesus, and there we rest. There are many imitations of this faith, but the genuine article is as different from all the imitations of it as the true coin of the realm is from the counterfeit of the forger.

Once more, *the believer's trials are things which unrenewed men cannot comprehend*. If some of us were to begin to tell the ungodly all about our spiritual conflicts, they would think us fools. If we were to describe to them our despair and our hope, our rejoicing and our depression, they would say, "You must be mad to have such experiences!" Just so, "there is a path which no fowl knoweth," and no fool knows, and no unsaved soul knows.

Our desires too, are beyond men's sight, and so are our struggles with doubt, and our temptations, and trials. Many a believer has been another Hercules, slaying a dragon, and cleansing the Augean stables, yet it is all unrecognized except by God, and by those who are themselves spiritual, for the path of Christian victory is one that the lion's whelp treads not.

So is it also with *the Christian's joys*. O brethren, I wish I had time to talk about them! I could not get to the end of that theme, for there are joys that we have, in which our spirit is as cool and composed as at any other moment of our life, yet those joys fill us with holy rapture, and sacred ecstasy, till we feel that, whether in the body or out of the body, we cannot tell, God knows.

Then the head leans on the bosom of the Savior, and the lip of Christ is set to our soul's lip, and He kisses us with the kisses of His mouth, and His love is better than wine. I know that worldly men say, "Give us gold and silver in abundance, fill our barns, and let our wine vats burst with new wine, give us all the good things of earth, and we will be content."

It is so, I know, but as for the Christian, he says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." When we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto us, we get into a way of joy which is as far above all human joy as the path of the eagle, soaring among the Alps, is above that of the mole burrowing in the ground.

There are many other equally high things about the way of a Christian which I have not time to mention. I will just refer to two other things. One is *the path of communion with Christ*. We, who believe in Jesus, know what it is to walk with God. Ay, to walk with God, though He is a consuming fire—to walk with Christ, though He is the Judge of the quick and the dead. I have been as conscious of the presence of God as ever I have been of the presence of my child or of my friend.

I have been as sure that I spoke with Christ, and emptied out my soul into His soul, and then received His heart's love into my heart, as I have been sure of any event in my whole history. I know what it is to receive sympathy from Christian men, but I also know what it is to have the sympathy of my Lord.

I speak not now of things that are only occasional, and out of the ordinary course of our lives. To some of us, it has become a blessed habit to speak with Christ—to speak, not merely into His ear, but right down into His heart, and to know that we have done so, and to act in a certain way because we

have done so, and to have no other motive for the action than the fact that we have put the case before the Lord, and asked whether it was our duty to do this, and when we knew that it was, have risked everything because we were sure that God had bidden us take the step. Oh, the blessedness of living with God! You cannot imitate it, you cannot get near it, it is unapproachable to unrenewed men, it “is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen.”

And it is so, lastly, *with regard to many a Christian’s death.* In this matter also, “there is a path which the vulture’s eye hath not seen.” There are some of you who have heard with your ears, and seen with your eyes, the wondrous manifestations at the deaths of some who were dear to you in life, and precious in death. Some of these have seen, in their departing moments, what no unaided human eye could ever have seen, and they have told us that they have heard words which it would not have been lawful for them to utter, and that they have enjoyed what it was impossible for human language ever to express, and while they have spoken, we have known that they spoke the truth, for the flash of their eye was supernatural, and the calm of their spirit, amidst racking pains, which naturally would depress, has been something sublime.

We have felt, with regard to their deathbed, as Moses did with regard to the burning bush—humble was the pallet, and humble was the patient, who lay upon it, but as the bush glowed with heavenly fire, that bed seemed to be bright with the presence of deity, for God was there with His children, and Christ was there succoring the members of His mystical body, and we have marvelled, and been astonished, and have felt that we could put off our shoes from our feet, for the place whereon we stood was holy ground.

Those of us whose calling makes us familiar with the departure of believers, have often felt that there was a path for dying saints which biographers could not describe, which language could not picture, and of which memory has left but faint traces upon the tablets of our soul, but which, in itself, was something indescribable, unutterable, divine.

May God grant to all of us the grace to know all this for ourselves! We can only know it by the illumination of the Divine Spirit, but that blessed Spirit illuminates all the souls that look to Jesus, indeed, their looking to Jesus is one effect of the divine illumination which they have already in part received.

Oh, that each heart here may “lay hold on eternal life” by laying hold on the Savior by faith, for then He will reveal to you the great mystery that the unsaved cannot comprehend, and He will say to you, as He said to Peter, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” The Lord bless you, beloved friends, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.